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Keeping busy

Army awards 2 local defense contracts

By Ben Cunningham, Assistant Metro Editor

Two local defense contractors have won contracts to continue their work upgrading vehicles for the Army.

The Army has awarded General Dynamics Land Systems a \$380 million contract to upgrade 180 Abrams tanks with new battlefield technology.

Pete Keating, a spokesman at the company's office in Warren, Mich., said the upgrade will provide tank crews with computerized color maps and displays, as well as enhanced ability to receive data from other vehicles in the area, such as jets and helicopters.

When the contract is complete, General Dynamics will have upgraded more than 1,000 of the Army's M1A2 Abrams tanks.

"It's probably the biggest single tanks contract we've had in two years," Keating said. "The previous contract was about half that size in 2005."

The work will continue a partnership with the Anniston Army Depot, with government employees performing some tasks and General Dynamics workers performing others. Some work also will be performed at the company's Lima, Ohio, plant, and in other facilities around the country.

BAE Systems Inc. will receive \$87.9 million to continue upgrading M113 vehicles. The Army uses different configurations of the tracked vehicle as personnel carriers, cargo carriers and to move missile and mortar systems, among other uses.

The BAE Systems contract also is a partnership with the Anniston Army Depot.

According to BAE spokeswoman Cindy Garrison, of the company's Anniston office, the work includes stripping vehicles and installing new engines, transmissions and steering systems, and adding new armor and protection against nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

The company has been performing the work for the Army since 1994, and completed its 3,000th M113 overhaul in October.

"This will keep us busy through September of 2008," Garrison said.